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BOOK REVIEWS

NATIONAL PROGRESS: 1907-1917 (THE AMERICAN NATION: A HISTORY. Volume 27). By Frederic Austin Ogg. New York: Harper & Brothers. Pp. xxii + 420. 1918.

One of the most difficult tasks for the historian is to write a non-partisan account of statesmen still living and of events recent in everyone's mind. Opinions are too likely to be based upon personal prejudice formed as the statesmen acted or the events occurred. Materials are lacking—letters, personal memoranda, reports of the whispered word—and frequently do not become accessible for more than a generation. The policy of Mr. Wilson towards Germany before our declaration of war, for example, cannot be properly assessed until there has been a complete disclosure of the “conversations” between the German ambassador and American officials, and until we have Mr. Wilson's own explanation of the course he followed, the purpose he had in view, the special information upon which he acted. On the domestic side of a country's recent history the difficulty is perhaps less apparent but no less real. Political and economic reform that, for the time, seemed wise and enduring, may, when tested, prove to have been an error; and the relative importance of events can only be rightly judged when a sufficient period has elapsed to let the historian assess the elements of permanence and of transience.

These difficulties are frankly recognized by Professor Ogg, and the reader will agree with the editor of the series that they have in a very large measure been vanquished. The volume is in every respect a worthy successor to the excellent monographs that have made *The American Nation: A History* scholarly and authoritative as well as readable.

Professor Ogg's volume falls into two well-defined parts which deal with domestic and foreign problems. It begins with the election of 1908: the currency and the tariff, railroad regulation, corporations and trusts, industry and labor, conservation and reclamation, population and immigration, democracy and responsibility in government, political unrest and party disin-

tegration—these are the problems considered, and the story of the way in which they were solved is told for the administrations of both Mr. Taft and Mr. Wilson. The election of 1912 receives a separate chapter, and the three following ones deal with the Democratic regime and the legislative activity that it inaugurated.

Minor criticisms of Professor Ogg's discussion will, of course, occur to every reader of his book. To the present reviewer it seems as if he has not given sufficient attention to the currents of political thought as they ran in 1912; to the forces of progressivism that showed their strength in the Democratic party in the vote received by Mr. Roosevelt; that a history of this period should have some analysis, beyond a two-line quotation from the preface, of the political philosophy that Mr. Wilson expounded in his campaign speeches published under the title, *The New Freedom*, and that more attention should be paid to the reason why the Democrats were able to pass such a great body of legislation so quickly. This was the enormous control, if not complete dominance, exerted by the President over Congress, aided by a greatly strengthened caucus. These increased powers of the presidency were exactly in consonance with the theories that Mr. Wilson had preached in his books on American government; and if future presidents are able to exercise—they will certainly try to do so—the powers of a prime minister as Mr. Wilson has been successful in doing, the lamentable need for further legislative responsibility in the Federal Government will be met, at least in part, and developments may not unlikely come constitutionally, as well as extra-constitutionally, in the relations between Congress and the Executive. Professor Ogg does not completely overlook these considerations; but he fails to stress them. Criticism, however, is tempered, if not made inappropriate by the statement in his preface that "perspective upon permanent lines is impossible of attainment" by the contemporary historian.

Of the 400 pages of text in the book, 245 are taken up with domestic problems. The remainder deal with the foreign problems of the United States, which, even before the beginning of the war, had become very important. Mr. Ogg discusses these questions in chapters on "The Guardianship of the Caribbean,"

"Latin-American Issues and Policies," "The Mexican Imbroglio," and "The Pacific and Asia." Here the discussion is for the most part full, accurate, and impartial. Mr. Ogg apparently does not attach a great deal of importance to President Wilson's declaration on the Monroe Doctrine nor does he consider the President's Pan-American policy as an attempt to make successful the endeavor of twenty-one states—the whole of the Western world—for friendly intercourse and peace among themselves. The treaties which it was announced in the early part of 1916 were to be negotiated with Latin-American states guaranteeing territorial integrity under Republican forms of government, promising aid against the exportation of arms to any but legally constituted governments, etc., are not mentioned. They are of special significance when taken in connection with the other elements of Mr. Wilson's Pan-American policy, the importance of which has been obscured by the attention given the Mexican imbroglio.

Our interest in the European War and the events leading to the entrance of America are covered in two chapters — thirty-three pages. It is doubtful whether justice can be done the subject in such brief compass. Mr. Ogg's attempt, in brief, is clear, non-partisan when it comes to describing Mr. Wilson's attempts to keep the United States out of war, and for the most part accurate. It is the Declaration of London of 1909, not 1911; and the "peace without victory" phrase appeared in the President's address to the Senate on January 22, 1917, not in his note to the belligerents (December, 1916) calling for a statement of war aims.

But these errors and the other criticisms that have been ventured are minor. Mr. Ogg's book should appeal to every American who desires accurate and well-digested information on the events he has lived through. The footnotes and a bibliographical essay indicate a wealth of material for intensive study.

LINDSAY ROGERS.

REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS BY AMERICAN DRAMATISTS, 1765-1819. Edited, with an Introduction to Each Play, by Montrose J. Moses. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1918. \$3.00.

A gratifying phase of the present-day study of American literature is the rapidly growing interest in the history of our drama,